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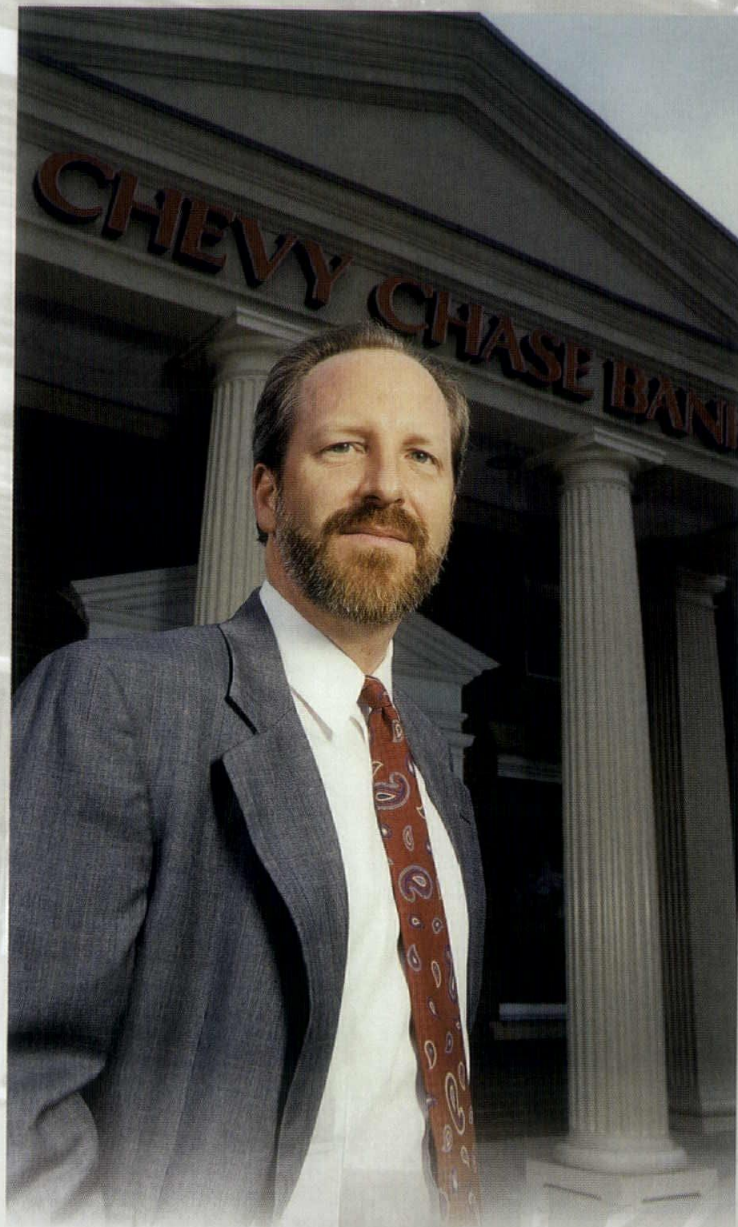
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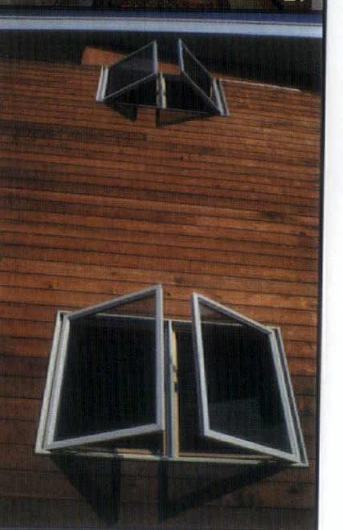
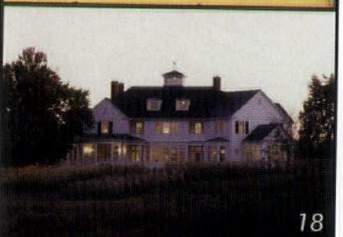
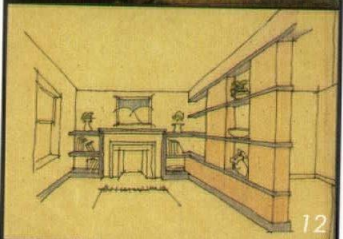
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AIA DC magazine



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◀ On the Cover: A beach house in Avalon, New Jersey by Studio27 Architecture.

Correction: In last issue's article about the International Spy Museum, we regretfully omitted credit to Shalom Baranes Associates, the architect responsible for restoring and adding to the LeDroit and Atlas Buildings, and Gallagher & Associates, the firm responsible for the design of museum exhibitions.

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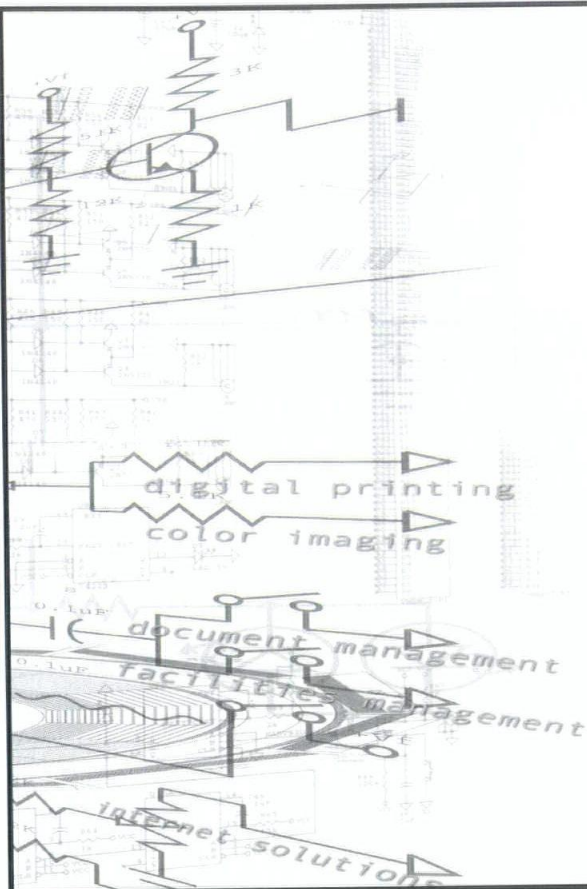
Welcome to the second annual residential design issue of *AIA/DC Magazine*. Since debuting last year, our quarterly magazine has received a national award of excellence from the American Institute of Architects for raising public awareness of architecture and design. The jury called the magazine "a thought-provoking and informative publication that offers readers a steady diet of delight." We are very proud of this award, but prouder still of the great public popularity of our magazine.

Architecture@Home is always my favorite issue because it is about dreams coming true. This year, we can help you renovate, whether you just want to find a place to store the kid's snow boots ("Answers@Home," page 29) or build a homestead that will last for generations ("A New Ancestral Home," page 16). We bring you stories of great clients (Mary Evans on page 12) and not-so-great clients ("An Architect Learns To Be A Client," page 11). We reveal the secrets of adding a master bath ("The Not So Big Bathroom," page 24), a splendid beach house ("4AVALON, 4REAL," page 22) and what renovations can add to the value of your home ("Renovating for Resale," page 33).

Most importantly, our editor Hannah McCann interviewed many Washington-area architects to find out what makes a good client ("The Good Client," page 7). Our Toolbox section features ways to get you ready to be one. Working with an architect can be a great experience, but as AIA Gold Medallist Frank Gehry says, "An architect is only as good as his clients." This issue is dedicated to the good client—one who communicates, collaborates, and inspires.

Mary Fitch, AICP
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P.S. For more information about any of the architects mentioned here, or for other architectural resources, please log on to our updated website at www.aiadc.com.



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THE GOOD CLIENT

Stories of Homeowners Who Made the Difference

by Hannah McCann

Architects will tell you that it happens more often than not. In the first meeting with a potential client, the homeowner apologizes for asking questions, sheepishly admitting, "I've never done this before."

Why apologize? For most homeowners, hiring an architect is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The only experts on the process are probably the architects themselves, who have worked with dozens of clients over the years. Here several local architects share their stories of clients who helped a project succeed.

Take an Active Role

"Some clients think that they hire an architect, go to Europe, and come back to a project that is done," says George Gordon, AIA, of George Gordon Architects. "But unless they're hiring a rock-star architect, and all they want is the name on it, the architect needs to know what the clients want."

The ideal client, in Gordon's mind, is like Rick: involved every step of the way. Gordon has worked with Rick for almost 20 years, first designing his retail stores, then parts of his home—starting

with a media room, then adding a three-car garage, and now a guest house.

"Thinking about adding to or renovating your home is an anxiety-provoking experience," Gordon says. "Everyone gets nervous about surprises. One of the things that has made Rick's projects successful is his level of involvement. He always wants to know what is going to happen. That's his method of coping with the stress and ensuring that there are no disappointments."

For Rick, no detail is unimportant. When it came time to choose the stone for the floor of the party room, Gordon showed him several samples he had in his office, suggesting that one, in particular, would work best. Rick didn't agree. "Instead of deciding in a typical office way, selecting from the range of samples we had here, Rick wanted to visit stone suppliers together and pick out a pallet in person. So one Saturday afternoon, we drove around to four or five places, and at the last one we found a reddish brown paving stone from Pennsylvania. It was different from what either of us had imagined, but it was really beautiful. It perfectly suited the color and texture of the other finishes and the stone of the fireplace."



When it came time to choose the stone for the floor of the party room, George Gordon, AIA, and his client visited suppliers together until they found the perfect pallet.





Robert C. Lautman

A photograph of the client's grandmother's house in South Carolina (left) inspired Muse Architects' addition to this Chevy Chase home (right).

Say What You Think

When your architect proudly shows you the first plans and drawings, nagging thoughts of, "Where will I put dirty laundry?" or "What about the closet space I wanted?" may seem embarrassingly pedantic if your architect is poetically describing the "feel" of the spaces.

But the thoughts crossing your mind are essential to getting the design right for you. Even whimsical notions can make the difference between a fine plan and a perfect plan, as the following example from Muse Architects illustrates.

The clients knew what they wanted in an addition on the back of their Chevy Chase home: a kitchen/family room, bathroom, and pantry on the main floor; a master bedroom, master bathroom, and study on the second floor; access to the garden with a covered porch. Most importantly, the addition should not look larger than the house.

"We presented initial sketches to the owners, illustrating a multi-gabled approach that would help reduce the scale of the two-story addition," Stephen Muse, FAIA, recalls. As neighbors and friends of Muse, the clients were predisposed to a certain candor with their architect. "John and Betsy offhandedly commented that it looked like Sunnyside, John's grandmother's home in Greenwood, South Carolina."

At the next meeting, they brought a picture of this historic residence where John had spent summers in his youth. After looking at the picture and hearing John's stories, we suggested that we could develop the addition's facade to recall the family home. They were surprised and delighted. The finished addition satisfies the family's needs, and also provides a very personal connection to their roots and history."

Robert C. Lautman



▲ Before



▲ After

The addition opens the house to the gardens and adds generous square footage: a kitchen/family room on the first level (partially pictured at right); a master bedroom, bath, and study above.





The owner of this house in Georgia sent enough photos to Bennett Frank McCarthy Architects that they could design a new porch without ever setting foot on the site.



Keep In Touch

Some clients hesitate to contact their architects outside of a scheduled meeting time. They may have visions of the fee-clock ticking or worry they're being a "bother." But according to architects, constant communication is essential for a successful project.

A client's call motivates an architect, says John Thompson, AIA, of John Thompson Architect. Over the past 20 years, Thompson has designed ongoing renovations for the home of a local commercial developer. Each time, the client approaches the project with the same attention to detail that he would bring to a business venture. "My client walks through the site, and he'll see a half-dozen things and e-mail me, saying, 'What's the status on the millworker? The paint? When are the light fixtures coming in?' He e-mails me at least once a day. He gets frustrated because I don't check it enough! Sometimes I need that, because I'm so busy I'm just dealing with what's right in front of me."



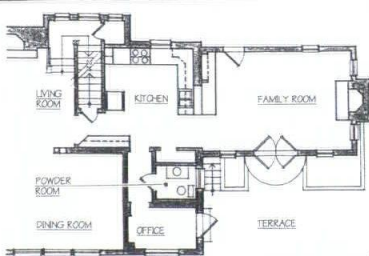
What can you see that your architect can't? Everything, in the extreme case of Bennett Frank McCarthy Architects, Inc., who designed a porch renovation without ever setting eyes on the site. The award-winning porch was designed for a homeowner in Cartersville, Georgia, who contacted the architects after seeing their work in a magazine.

"When she called, we explained that the obvious complication was the geographical barrier between our office and the project site," says Shawn Buehler, a Project Architect at Bennett Frank McCarthy. "Undeterred, Beth sent us a series of numbered photographs along with an e-mail that described the various views. Using the pictures and measurements she provided, we produced three schemes and faxed them to her. By phone and e-mail, we managed to combine the preferred features of the three schemes into one set of plans and elevations which were then developed into construction documents."

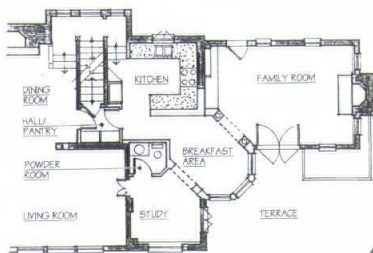
"The next thing we knew, our client was calling us with various construction questions. Despite our distance from the site, we were kept involved in the selection of the stone, interpretation of the drawings, and construction of most every detail. When e-mail and phone proved inadequate, we faxed sketches of various details. Many clients and builders would see the absent architect as a chance to cut corners, but thanks to Beth, we were closely involved in the process."

"Beth has asked us about two additional projects, both more complicated than the porch. Given the outcome of the first project, we are eager to get started."

John Thompson, AIA, has designed ongoing renovations for the home of a commercial developer, who approaches each project with the same attention to detail that he would bring to a business venture.



▲ Before



▲ After

Instead of an addition, this house just needed a reorganization, Brennan + Company realized. At right, the breakfast area looks out to the expansive backyard—another reason for keeping the house in its original footprint.



Ann Gummerson Photography

Trust

If you make sure that the architect knows what you want, he or she will make sure you get it. That's the architect's job. Now trust comes into the picture.

Perhaps you've always imagined your new kitchen and family room as a large addition on the back of your house, as a client of Brennan + Company's did. Rob Brennan, AIA, tried to draw it the client's way. "Each time we sketched adding square footage, we saw the same problem. The plan of the house was wrong."

"Even for a straightforward addition, we always begin by trying to figure out the history of a house," Brennan explains. "We walk

backwards in time to when it was built, through a lineage of owners, the addition of modern conveniences. When we add on, it should be in the spirit of the original plan."

Instead of an addition, Brennan proposed flipping the living and dining room and reorganizing the existing kitchen and family room, only adding a small bay for informal eating. "We convinced the client that they could accomplish their goals for interior space, plus protect the size and special nature of their rear yard, by simply changing the plan."

As you approach the construction stage of a project, and big

"Since we did this in three phases, we learned by the third phase to just let Lorena Checa make all the decisions. She always protected us from being overcharged," recalls the owner of this home.



Omar Salinas

expenses are looming, it can be difficult to trust your architect. Lorena Checa, AIA, of Lorena Checa Associates, offers her clients a selection of bids from contractors she recommends. But often there's one contractor she thinks is best for the job; it may or may not be the one who's the most affordable. She'll encourage her client to trust her opinion, but the client makes the final decision.

A recent project of Checa's was three-part: first the renovation of two bathrooms, then the addition of two soundproof music rooms and a kitchen, and finally a second-floor master bedroom and hot tub deck in the treetops.

Checa's client recalls, "When putting the first two projects out to bid, we didn't choose the builder Lorena Checa preferred because his price was higher. By the third phase, we knew to choose Lorena's preferred builder. Hindsight taught us that this choice cost us less because this builder really included all the expenses in the initial bid and did a superior job. The bargain contractor did not know his business as well and neglected to include needed items. Since we did this project in three phases, we learned by the third phase to just let Lorena make the decisions. She always protected us from being overcharged."

Good Results

To make great architecture, the architect-client collaboration must be equal parts architect and client. The architect brings technical know-how and creative energy; the client provides the sounding board, inspiration, and reality check that make a project succeed. 🏡

Omar Salinas



An Architect Learns How To Be a Client

by Glenn R. MacCullough, AIA

After almost 15 years of designing additions and houses, I thought that adding to my own 1927 bungalow would be relatively easy. After all, I was going to be the architect *and* the client. I scheduled the work in our office as if it were just another project, and I intended to make all of the necessary choices for things like finishes and appliances well in advance, as I always advise my clients to do.

I soon discovered that it was impossible to develop the design during the workday. There was always a paying client whose work took precedence. Confined to weekends and weeknights, I produced a set of "working drawings" that was far less complete than I would have prepared for another client. They illustrated how the rooms would look and feel, but not how someone would actually build them.

All of the work that should have gone into the drawings went into contract administration—the architectural expression for "being on the site day and night." I was there when the windows had to be reworked because the framed openings did not come out as expected. I *wasn't* there as the carpenters sat and waited until I showed up to tell them exactly how the fancy rafter tail cuts should look. I spent the better part of each morning answering questions, solving problems, and trying to avoid another day of paying for no progress.

Meanwhile, deciding on the finishes for my own project proved to be torture. It was easy for me to recommend finishes for my clients, but now I had to live with the choices. I wanted the flexibility to change my mind through the process. I spent every spare minute I had in tile showrooms, plumbing supply stores, electrical supply stores, and appliance stores, but I still did not order most of the finishes in time.

In the end, however, all of the headaches were worth it. The addition is much more than just 800 square feet of new space for me, my wife, and my young son. It is a home for all of us, rich with character and, in time, family traditions. The screened porch is where we spend summer evenings watching the colors in the garden slowly fade; the master bedroom is a place for family mornings in front of the fireplace; the baby's room will one day be where he does his homework and, eventually, shuts out his annoying parents.

After being my own client, I better understand that this is what homeowners hope for when they hire an architect. I am eager to listen, and I hope that they will hear me when I say, "Choose your finishes right away."

FOCUS



Over 20 years, Mark McInturff, FAIA, has worked with Mary Evans to make her house just right.

A True Fit

My Story of Working with One Architect over 20 Years

by Mary Evans

How It All Started

I bought this house in 1978 because of the location and the small size, ideal for a single person. After about a year, I was finally settled in but bothered by the room arrangement: the kitchen was in the front, making it awkward to get to the dining room. I knew that the house could be improved, but I didn't know how.

I didn't know any architects, and I knew nothing about how to select one. My next-door neighbor had used Wiebenson Associates Architects. I had to start somewhere, so that's who I called.

Mr. Wiebenson came over and walked around for an hour, throwing out tons of ideas. My own thought was to take out the wall between the living and dining rooms so the kitchen would be more accessible. He said, "There are two reasons you don't want to do that: one, people generally like separate living and dining space, and two, this is a bearing wall—if you tear it out, the house will fall down!" That was my first encounter with his firm's humor!

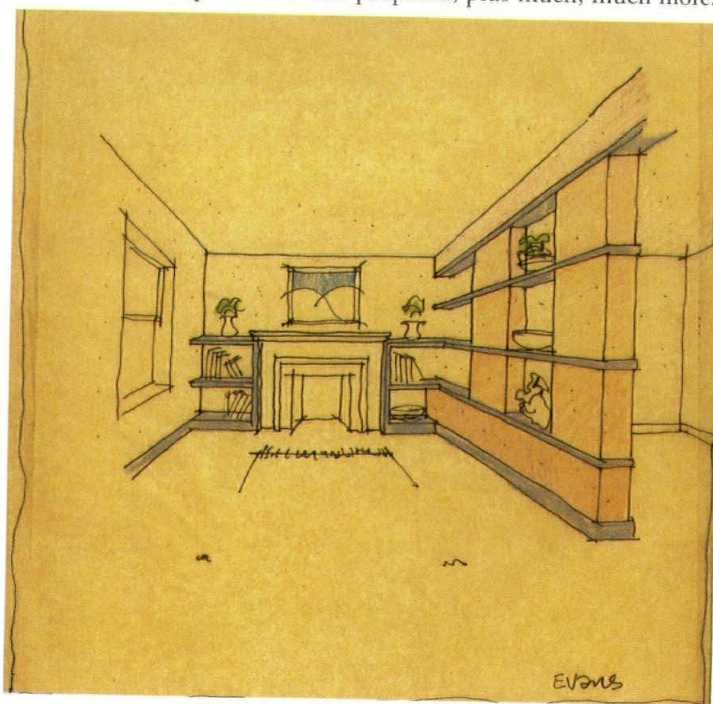
Wieb (as I would come to call him) drew a simple sketch of what he thought would work best. I still have it, and it is basically what we did. The plan consisted of putting the study in the front and the kitchen in the back, then breaking out the walls to give me the access I wanted between the kitchen and dining areas. It was both very clever and solved my problem, so I said, "Let's do it."

At that point, a young

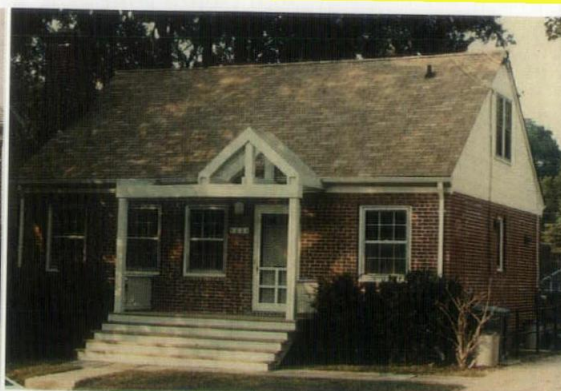
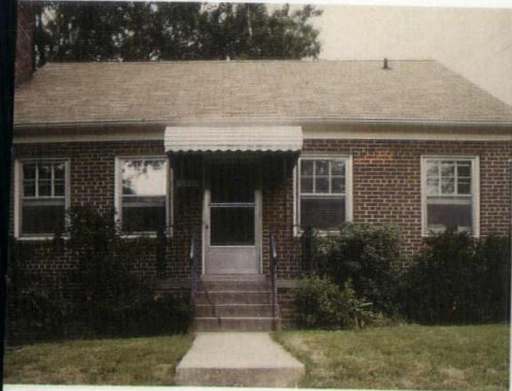


This first simple sketch is basically what we did.

architect in the firm, Mark McInturff, took over. A former student of Wieb's, Mark must have been about 30 then, and he was assigned to work out the details for my house. Little did I know that, for the next 20 years—as Mark would go on to form his own firm, McInturff Architects, and win local, national, and international recognition for his designs—we would work together to do all that simple sketch had proposed, plus much, much more.



Instead of columns, Mark designed cut-outs in the walls with open shelving for dishes.



The house has evolved over the years, first with Mark's design and then with a garden by Oehme, Van Sweden & Associates.

When Mark first presented me with the plans, I didn't like some aspects, especially the columns in the living room. "This house is too small for columns!" I said. "A Roman villa, yes, but this place is too small."

Mark said, "Talk to me, Mary. I will draw what's in my head, but *you* have to live here." So, he went back to the drawing board and designed the cut-outs in the walls that hold open shelves for display. The lines of the shelves continue in thin strips of molding around all interior walls as well as inside and outside the stairwell.

I hope all architects tell their clients, "Talk to me"—and I hope their clients do. If there's one thing I've learned over the past 20 years, it's to *pay attention* to what's going on and speak up. I always tried my best to tell Mark what I wanted, and he was always willing to listen. As a result, I can say every inch of this house has been built to suit my needs.

Each time we talked, I brought the practical side and Mark saw how to make it work aesthetically. For example, Mark wanted all the cabinets in my kitchen to be doorless and open. I said, "Mark, you don't cook, do you?" We compromised, leaving some open and some closed, so I can hide the soup cans yet display attractive dishes.

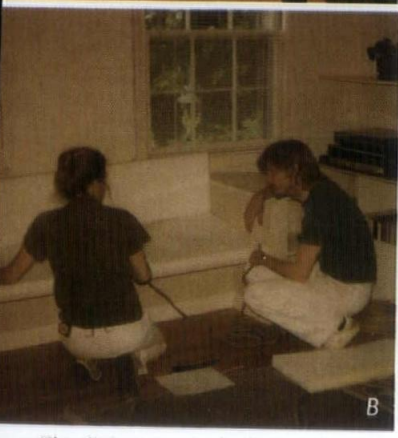
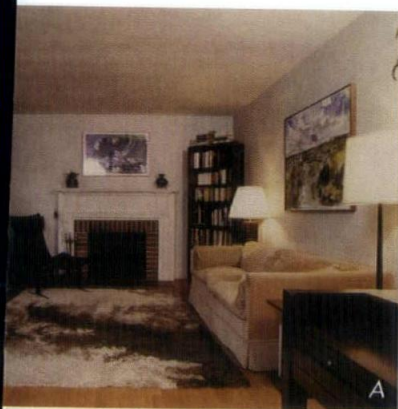
When the molding finally went up, Mark came over with his daughter Marissa, who was about three then, to look at it. The floors had just been finished, so they tip-toed around in their socks. By the grin on his face, I could tell he was truly pleased with the result. That's when it dawned on me how hard it must be for an architect to wait for someone else to bring his or her vision to life.

Phase Two: Furniture

The major work was finished in the spring of '82. At that point it was obvious to me that I needed some different furniture. I took a short course on interior design and then picked out a beautiful sofa. However, within five minutes after it arrived, I said, "Get it out of here. It competes with the architecture."

Then I got a wild idea and called Mark. "I want you to design me a sofa." He had never designed furniture before, but he had a lot of fun. He read up on furniture-making at the library and even made a little model sofa that he eventually gave to his daughter for her dollhouse. A cabinetmaker built the frame in Mark's basement, and after they brought it over, one of Mark's students put in the upholstery. The sofa fit so well with the architecture that he went on to design and build three additional pieces.

David L. Hamilton Photography



The living room: before (A), as Mark and his student built the furniture (B), and today (C).



Phase Three: The Garden

With my new wall of windows on the back of the house, I started looking critically at the backyard. First I decided I needed a patio. Again, I called Mark, who designed a simple patio with ornamental planters. The unifying theme would be a new paint motif on the back of the house that mimicked the shape of the planters.

Mark knows I'm relatively conservative. When he made a drawing of the paint motif, he cautioned me, "I'm going to show you this, but don't react for two days."

Just as he'd anticipated, my first reaction was negative. Trying to be open-minded, I took his drawing to the office to get some other opinions. My supervisor said, "Look, it's not structural. If you don't like it, you can paint over it later." Then, a colleague piped up, "Mary, everybody needs a little fantasy in their lives!" Bingo! I decided to do it, and I've never regretted it.

A few days later, Mark was up on a ladder at the back of the house, drawing the lines that the painter would later fill in. I called up, "Mark, you look like Michelangelo!"

He replied, "If I am, then you are the Pope, and 'It will be done when it is done!'"

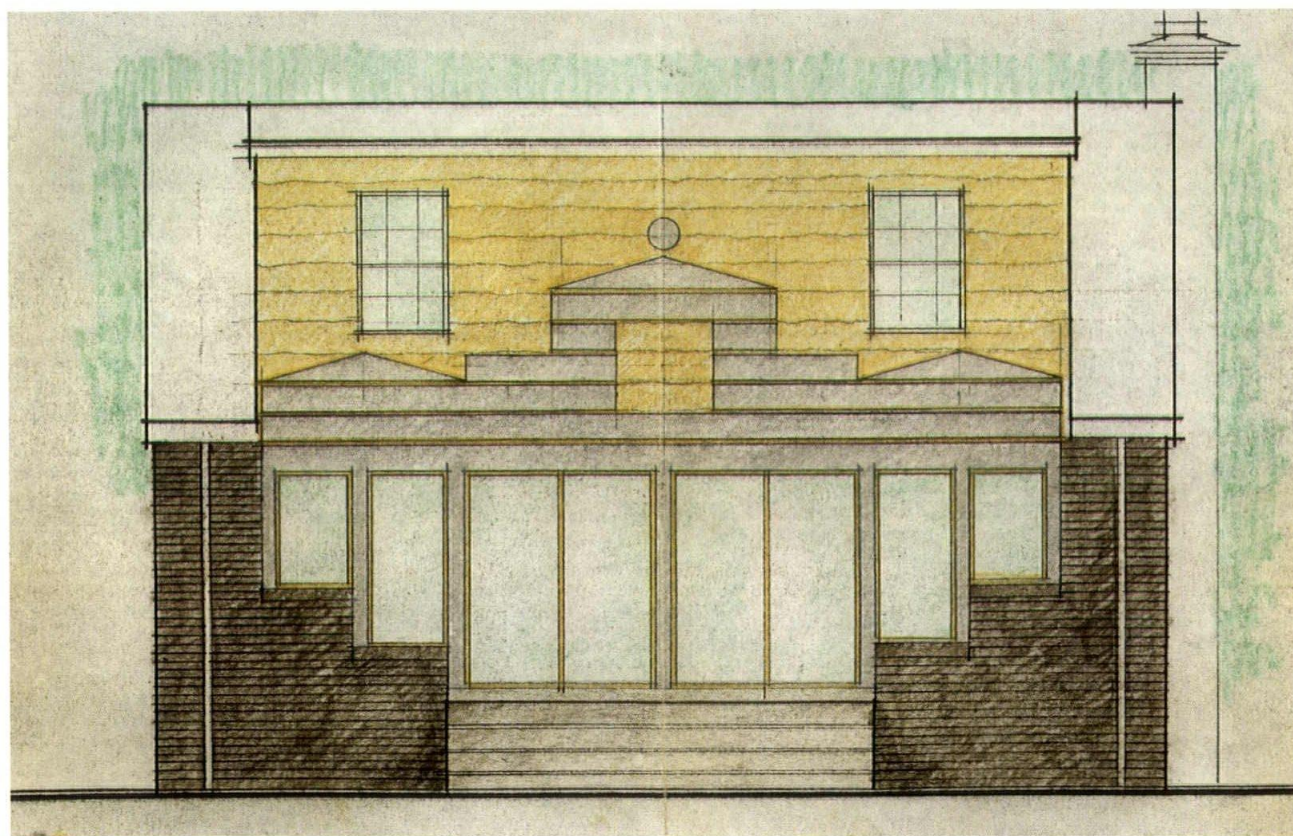
Soon, I was enjoying my new patio yet still didn't like the backyard. Again, I didn't know what I wanted, but I knew I needed a real garden. My supervisor had a beautiful garden by landscape architects Oehme, Van Sweden & Associates, so I that's who I called.

In my first meeting with Jim van Sweden, I told him, "Make the garden complement the house." When he showed me the drawings, in color, there was no way to say no. It was so beautiful. Yes, I had to take out a second mortgage, but it was worth it. My magnificent garden, added the fall of '83, both extends and enhances the house.

Final Phase: A Home Office

We had never touched the basement because there had been no need to. I used it only once a week to do my laundry.

However, when I retired in 1996, I realized that I needed an office as a place to put all my books and to hide a computer that,



Mark knows I'm relatively conservative. When he made a drawing of the paint motif for the back of the house, he cautioned me, "I'm going to show you this, but don't react for two days."



At first, the back yard was a plain lot (page 14, at left). Today, it is a magnificent garden.

In Detail: McInturff Architects is a new monograph on the work of Mark McInturff, FAIA, and his award-winning firm. Images Publishing Group, Victoria, Australia; \$35. Available at ALA Bookstore, the National Building Museum, Franz Bader, Amazon.com, Borders Books, and Barnes & Noble.

upstairs, would have clashed with the architecture. I called Mark and said, "Let's finish the house."

First, Mark designed an office that would take up the whole basement. "What about laundry?" I asked, reminding him, "You told me to talk to you." "I always get caught in my own words!" he chuckled.

We ended up splitting the basement in half. One half is the laundry room and storage, and the other half is the office—which is simply spectacular. One whole wall has handmade wood bookcases and cabinets, and the opposite walls are painted in five brilliant colors that are wonderful—peaceful yet bright. I haven't put up any artwork, because these walls in themselves are art.

The Ultimate Compliment

My former Tai Chi master is also a frequently consulted master of *feng shui*. I wanted his opinion of what I had done to the house, but it took me four years before I had the courage to invite him over. I wasn't sure what I would do if he didn't like it. As soon as he arrived, I started to explain, "Well, we moved this door and ..." but then stopped, realizing that all he cared about was the *feel*.

So I went into the kitchen to stay out of his way, literally biting my nails. After walking around, just observing, feeling, and sensing, he finally came back to the kitchen and said, "Mary, it's good. It's got vitality."

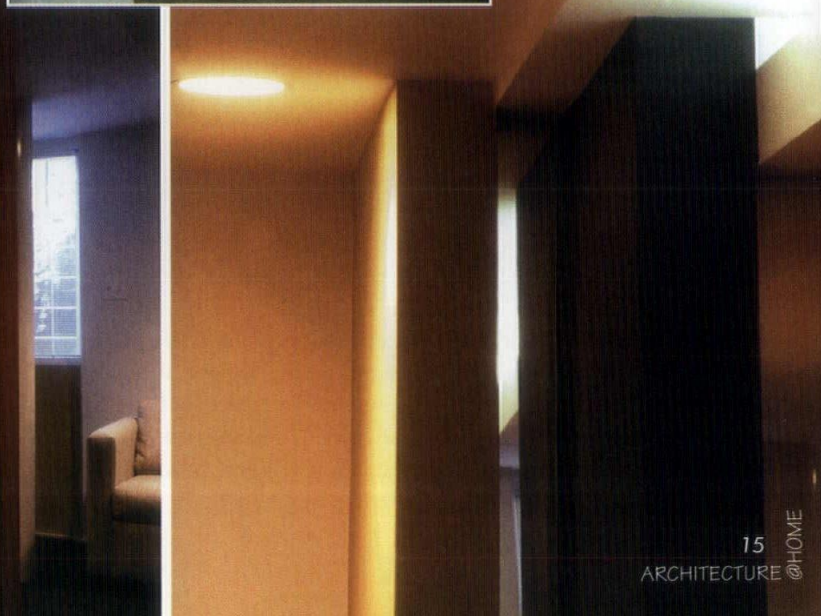
Julia Heine



Before

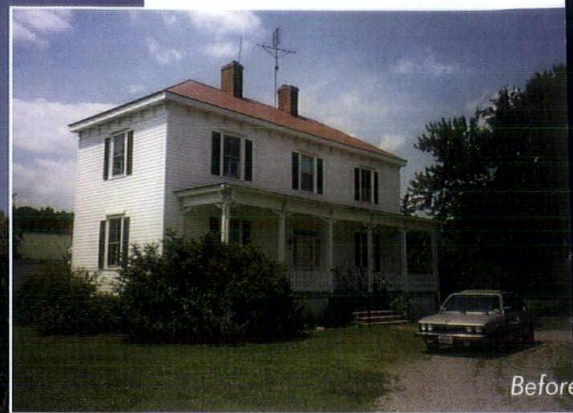
Finishing the house: Mark transformed half of my basement into a spectacular home office with handmade wood bookcases and walls painted in five different colors.

Julia Heine

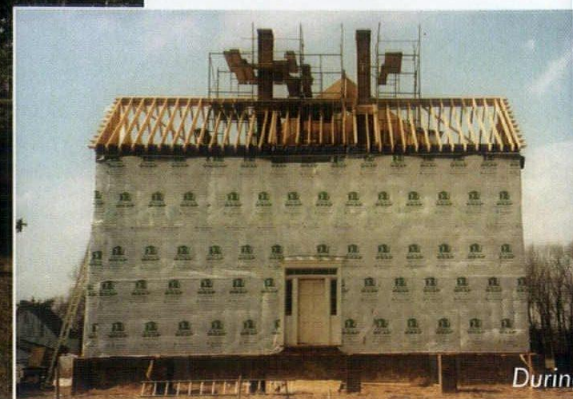




Walter Smalling



Before



During

A New Ancestral Home

Versaci Neumann Designs a Farmhouse for Generations Ahead

by Hannah McCann

In the 1880s, John Beverley built a house on the hilltop of Kendale, his 2,500-acre farm on a Virginia peninsula between the Rappahannock River and a tidal creek called the Occupacia. It was a home for his new bride, simple and comfortable.

Three generations later, descendant Harrison Wellford's wife, Sue, was trying to convince her husband that the old farmhouse on the hill could be a home again. "There's something about the magic of an old house, and the site feels almost like big-sky Montana," she said.

The house had been leased to the farm manager for 80 years, then vacant. It was rickety and far from hospitable—not what Harrison Wellford had in mind for a new family homestead, a place for the couple's two grown daughters, their husbands, and future grandchildren to congregate on weekends and holidays.

"I wasn't sure we could do it with this house," he recalls. "I wanted something versatile." Sue Wellford adds, "Something that would last through our children's lives and beyond."

Versatility is essential in a second home, the Wellfords had discovered. They had been coming to the farm for the last 30 years, sharing the newer colonial-style house that Harrison Wellford's parents had built on the property when they retired. It was "a family mecca," recalls Sue Wellford. "We went there at least once a month. The kids always wanted to go, and as they got older they brought their friends, and eventually got married there."

But as the extended family grew, the house felt more cramped; at times the parents would be sharing one bedroom with their two adult children. Now, with the possibility of grandchildren ahead, Harrison and Sue Wellford wanted to build a place at Kendale that

could grow with their family's needs over time.

They began to call architects whom friends recommended. "What we really wanted was someone who could link old and new," Sue Wellford recalls. "Then I just happened to see the *Washingtonian*." Every June, *Washingtonian* features the winners of the Washington Chapter/AIA's residential design awards program. Versaci Neumann & Partners are frequent winners for new homes that look like they've "always been there;" one of these, the Good Residence in Waterford, Virginia, won in 1998. Sue Wellford remembers, "I saw the house in Waterford and said, 'Wow, that's right up our alley.'"

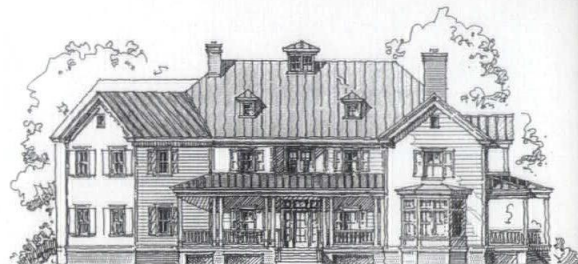
"Their question was, 'Is it new or old?'" Versaci Neumann principal David Neumann, AIA, recalls from his first conversation with the Wellfords. "They thought that because we could walk that line, we would know how to approach their project."

The Wellfords had interviewed other architects, but when Neumann visited the site, "I felt like we would get much more attention and flexibility," Harrison Wellford recalls. "David was someone who would let us participate in the process, not keep us at arm's length."

As Neumann took his first look at the old farmhouse, he thought to himself, "There are endless possibilities."

"The Wellfords had a laundry list of requirements: a new kitchen, a family room, a couple of bedrooms, and hopefully a bathroom for every bedroom. It wasn't until they saw our various schemes that they said, 'Oh my gosh, there are all of these options. What is it that we really want?'"

"We like to think that we have a thoroughly probed program



The original house (left) and additions the architect proposed. "Most projects benefit from exploring a number of different solutions," says David Neumann, AIA.

before we begin" Neumann says, "but often the design process stimulates new ideas. It happens all the time. There's not this clearly defined path, where you put one foot in front of the next. It's a little more circuitous than that. Sometimes you're sidetracked, sometimes a new path opens up and leads the designer in another direction. Most projects benefit from exploring a number of different solutions."

"It's very hard to get a bead on what you want," Sue Wellford admits. "I had spent the past five years with graph paper trying to sketch something, but we just had a vague idea."

A round of memos began, where Sue Wellford would describe the family's needs and Neumann would respond with questions or suggestions for solutions. "There was so much give and take, it allowed the creativity to flow. What he would show us would stimulate us and make us think about what we wanted. The more I'd say, 'This isn't right,' or 'I want this,' the better it would become."

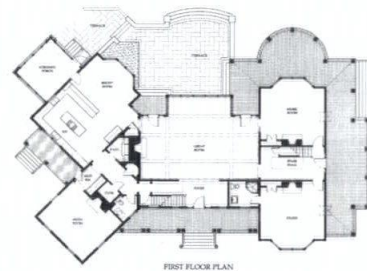
"I really did keep in daily contact," Sue Wellford continues. "That's one reason I think we can say there's nothing we would do differently. You only get it right if you pay attention. God's in the details—we really did feel that way."

In addition to evaluating their current needs, the Wellfords had to consider the future. If taking the stairs became a trial, the first-floor study has a full bathroom so it could be converted to a bedroom. Where could teenage grandchildren

and their friends stay? Neumann designed a bunkroom in the attic, and predicted its users might be noisy. "It's the only place in the house that has carpet, not hardwood floors," he explains.

Beyond such practical concerns, the Wellfords had a general sense of how the home should feel. "For a place that's going to have babies, teenagers, grandparents—all on top of each other—we wanted lots of semi-private spaces where you could escape to read, to nap, to fall in love—whatever," Harrison Wellford says. Neumann incorporated balconies, patios, porches, and a magical cupola to serve as retreats. "There are lots of little places where a child can let his imagination run wild," says Sue Wellford.

"We also wanted a house of light," Harrison Wellford recalls. "My great-grandfather Beverley must have had the same desire, because the windows in the old house, which we preserved and copied, were perfect for this purpose." The two wings of the expanded house open like a book to the spectacle of the river. "The views surround you," Harrison Wellford reports. "I could



"We wanted lots of semi-private spaces where you could escape to read, to nap, to fall in love...little places where a child can let his imagination run wild."

Smalling

Walter Smalling





"The views surround you. I could follow a fox down by the river by walking from room to room."

Walter Smalling

follow a fox down by the river by walking from room to room upstairs."

"The house is probably twice as large as it was, and it has four times as much porch," Neumann says, "but we also wanted to maintain a connection to the original house's history. Mainly, we saved the skeleton with some vestiges: the wood flooring, the staircase, old mantelpieces. The room proportions in the old part of the house were wonderful. They formed the paradigm for proportions in the rest of the house."

Materials in the new addition are similar to those in the original house. These include clapboard siding, two-over-two windows, a

painted tin roof, and wood-molded bricks in the foundation and chimney. Neumann explains the choice of brick: "They're somewhat irregular, though not as irregular as the hand-formed bricks used in 1800s construction would have been. But they have more character and variance than the machine-made bricks made today."

All of these details matter when you're creating a homestead. As Harrison Wellford sees it, "We were building not for ourselves, but for the generations ahead." 🏡

Walter Smalling





A Larger House Not A House With A Tacked-On Addition

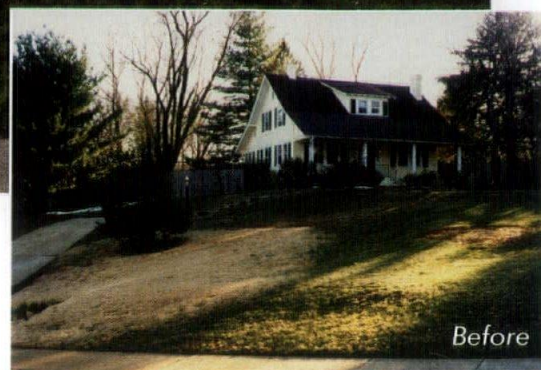
by Thomas F. Klose, AIA

In 1996, a North Arlington couple who had recently become new parents asked our firm to expand their 1918 bungalow, which had one-and-a-half stories and a basement. Like most owners of old houses, our clients wanted an open-plan family room and kitchen, both for daily living and for entertaining. They also wanted a basement-level recreation room, two more bedrooms, another bathroom, and a new entrance from the driveway to the kitchen.

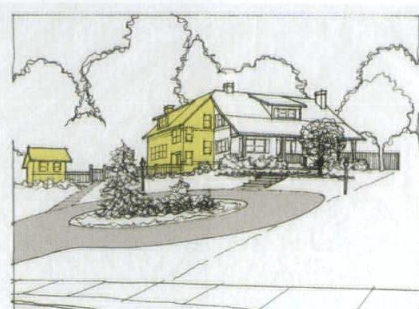
Many houses in their neighborhood had additions in a style totally different from that of the original—an older brick colonial, say, with an aluminum-sided addition. We drove around and looked at some examples, and my clients agreed that they did not want a box or “bag” on their house. From the beginning, we wanted the renovation to look like a larger version of the old house, not like a house with a tacked-on addition. On the inside, we could take greater liberties, providing a contemporary floor plan but ensuring that the change from the old to the new was not too abrupt.

After photographing, measuring, and drawing the existing house, we designed two alternative plans and presented them to our clients. One had a two-and-a-half story tower that took advantage of the great views of the nearby parkland. The second had a one-and-a-half story addition with a new entrance that looked more like a back door than a main entrance. We talked about the advantages and limitations of each and ended by combining the features they liked best into one provisional plan. That meeting was followed by several more, each one getting into more detail; at our last session, we were discussing things such as the location of the light switches.

The final design wraps a one-and-a-half story addition around the original kitchen to the side and back of the house. The three levels of the expanded house are connected by an open stair tower that we came to call “the atrium.” This 12' x 12' space contains the new entrance at ground level, a mud room on a landing halfway to the basement, and a sitting area on a landing halfway



Before



We presented our clients with two plans and ended up combining them into the final design (at right).



Open spaces between the flights of stairs allow light to fill the house.



How To Create A Larger House: A Few Guidelines

To ensure that our finished product would look like one large house instead of a small house with an addition tacked on, we established a few strict guidelines and stuck to them throughout the design and construction process.

First, the basic shapes—or architectural massing—used in the addition are derived from the original house. The heights, widths and roof slopes are the same in both; the dormers in the new bedrooms exactly match the one in the original house; and the overhangs are all the same.

Second, we used the same materials in the addition as those in the original house. The new stucco foundation, wood siding, shingle siding, wood trim, windows, and doors, plus the louvers, gutters, downspouts, and roofing—all match their counterparts in the old house. Although the materials are the same, we allowed some flexibility in their placement. For example, in the old house most of the windows are grouped by twos, but in the family room and in the recreation room, four window units are placed side by side to let in more light and provide a more open feeling. The windows in the atrium step down with the stair landings and do not line up with anything in the original house. These variations helped make the new composition more interesting.

Last, we matched the details in both structures. For example, the same wood band at the base of the original house is wrapped around the addition. The new exterior corner boards, siding, trim overhangs, and stair railings are derived from the original house. Inside, the wood flooring, painted walls and ceilings, wood trim, six-panel doors, hardware, and window treatments match the details used in the original house. By coordinating the paint color in the old and new parts of the house, we further reinforced the feeling of unity.

between the new family room and the two new bedrooms. Open spaces between the flights of stairs allow light from six windows and a glass door to fill the rest of the house. By providing a second way to access the rooms in the original house, the atrium unifies the old and new parts into a single, larger house.

Growing Again

Four years after the addition was completed, our clients moved to California. We got a call from the new owners, a family who had often admired the house for its old-house look and new-house convenience and who bought it as soon as it came on the market. After we talked, they retained our firm to add a two-car garage and a guest suite and to improve the look of the front porch.

We connected the guest house/garage to the base of the atrium by a large breezeway, which provides a direct connection from the garage to the kitchen—always a good idea. A landscaped courtyard fills the space between the two main structures. The original mud room was extended into the new breezeway, which now functions as an “animal house” for a Labrador retriever, a guinea pig, and fish. Using the same guidelines we had followed on the first project, we were careful to align the garage and the guest suite with the floor levels inside the old part of the house. A new front porch with an old-house look completes the picture.

After we finished expanding the house for the new owners, we did similar work for several of their friends. Some wanted to add to an older house without sacrificing the “old house” look. Others lived in historic neighborhoods with review boards that required additions and renovations to match the existing context. In one respect, however, most of them wanted the same thing: the feeling of an old house just like their grandparents’, where they could raise a family and, later on, when the children were grown, have them and their families come visit. 🏡

The background of the entire page is a detailed architectural drawing, likely a site plan or floor plan. It features a grid of lines, various geometric shapes like rectangles and diamonds, and numerous small text labels and arrows. Some visible labels include "1/2\"/>

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Project Profile

4AVALON, 4REAL

Studio27 Designs a Beach House that Makes Sense

by Hannah McCann

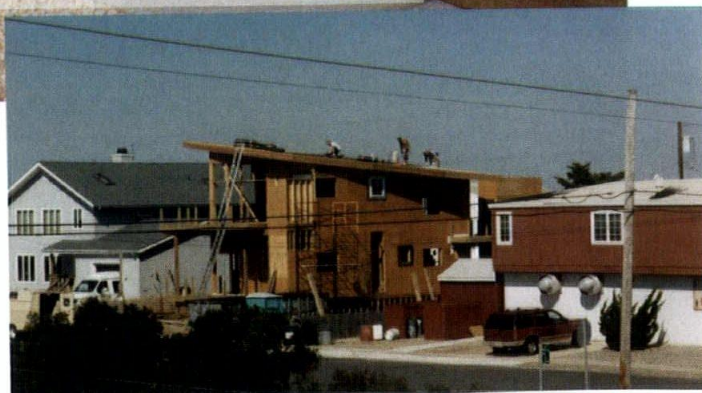
With no hesitation, Philip and Janet Bolbach could tell you where they'd want to build a beach house: Avalon, New Jersey. Philip has been vacationing in Avalon since he was an infant, and Janet joined him when they started dating. Their three daughters grew up spending summers on the island in houses the family shared with friends. Although the Bolbachs live in Virginia, their devotion to Avalon is proclaimed on their license plates, "CAVALON" and "4AVALON."

So what was holding them back from building the beach house of their dreams? "Money," Philip Bolbach says frankly. "That's an easy answer. We were raising three kids."

Nonetheless, Philip Bolbach found himself in 1994 eyeing a vacant lot in Avalon. Yes, it was awkwardly sandwiched between a deli and another house closer to the water. But it was just one house in from the shore, and it was a bargain by island standards: \$169,000.

The question was what they could build on the lot. What would block the view of the deli but catch views of the water around the house in front? More importantly, what could the Bolbachs afford to build?

Philip and Janet
Bolbach at the start
of construction.





Ray and Burke's collaboration (at left) on their in-laws' beach house led to the start of their firm, Studio 27. By specifying pilings (at right), Burke and Ray cut the cost of the foundation in half.

The answer turned out to be a custom-designed, four bedroom, two-and-a-half bath, redwood beach house finished in 1997 for \$168,000.

The Bolbachs were lucky: they had two architects at their service who took the challenge of creating the perfect family getaway very seriously. They were John Burke, AIA, and Todd Ray, AIA, each married to a Bolbach daughter.

At the time, Burke and Ray worked for different architecture firms. They lived 150 miles apart. But after hours, by fax and e-mail, the two designed the Bolbach's captivating residence—and also discovered how well they worked together. This collaboration would prove to be the start of their award-winning firm, Studio27 Architecture.

A Lesson in Efficiency

The firms where Burke and Ray worked typically handled large commercial projects. "We were both familiar with cash-driven decision-making," explains Ray. "We'd learned that if you make an efficient utility core—centralize the plumbing supply and return piping and the heating and air conditioning ducts, so distributions are minimized—you can reduce costs."

In home design, the same principle is not only cost-efficient but space-efficient. Burke and Ray centralized the bathrooms, laundry room, kitchen, and stair. This core is flanked by public space on one side and private space on the other. As a result, the 1,800-square-foot house feels larger than it is.

By pushing the house to the southwestern edge of the lot, Burke and Ray managed to capture views of the water around the neighboring house. "Actually you can see the water from every room in the house except the bathrooms," Philip Bolbach boasts. The less savory view of the deli is blocked by a windowless wall that houses the air conditioning units, an outdoor shower, and storage space for deck furniture.

From the beginning, Burke and Ray designed the home's skeleton using standard lumber lengths. "That way we reduced the amount of labor spent on cutting lumber as well as waste," says Ray, adding, "It really bothers me to go out to a job site and see a dumpster full of good lumber."

Burke and Ray also questioned how Avalon contractors were setting new homes' foundations. "Their construction methods were based on methods used inland," explains Ray. When building

on solid ground, contractors dig a long trench and fill it with concrete; this is a "spread footing." On the island, where the ground is soft, builders would first stake pilings, then lay the spread footings. Burke and Ray simply specified pilings. "We cut the cost of the foundation in half," Ray reports.

Long-term costs in building a vacation home can be as important as up-front expenses. Ray explains that, because of flooding concerns, "we found out that if we raised the first floor up another foot we could get a substantial break on the insurance rates for the life of the house. That's why the stairs to the house are so high. We integrated it into the design."

A pleasant surprise in long-range savings has been how temperate the house stays in the summer. "Because of the crosswinds and house orientation, the house is cooled almost without air conditioning," Ray says. In addition to the island breeze, natural light courses through the house, passing easily through interior windows that Ray and Burke designed.

In the details, the Bolbachs saved money by using builder-grade materials where they could, such as flat-stock molding and dowel handrails. The savings were passed on to noticeable finishes like marble floors in the bathroom, Corian countertops, custom light fixtures, and plate-glass guardrails between the living spaces and the stairwell.

After all of Burke and Ray's careful economy, serendipity allowed for one unexpected luxury. "We had designed the whole house to be cedar. When the builder called to order it, they said, 'Hey, we've got a truckload of redwood here. You can have it for less than the cedar.'" Ray is thrilled at the wood's rich color and how gracefully it ages. Plus, "we saved thousands on that," he says proudly. ■



A view of the sunset from the Bolbach's deck.

Drawing Board

The Not So Big Bathroom

A Reality Check

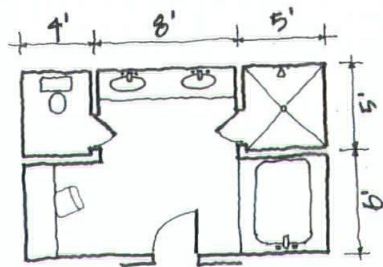
by Stephen J. Vanze, AIA

It's almost irresistible. The big, beautiful master bathroom with rich, opulent materials: marble floors, marble counters, gold-plated sinks and faucets, showers that produce water from every direction, and floors that are slightly warm to the touch. You've seen them in glossy magazines and, maybe, at friends' homes. Things you never knew existed, now you cannot live without.

If you decide to go ahead with a new master bath—whether it will be part of your existing home or a new master suite addition—plan carefully. Master baths can get very big and very expensive.

How Big is Big?

Pictures can be deceptive. A typical tub deck is a minimum of three-and-a-half feet wide and almost seven feet long. A double sink counter is usually six feet long and almost two feet deep. That shower is probably four feet by four feet and the space in the middle of the bathroom, with the chair and small dressing table, is around five feet wide and eight feet long. A typical master bathroom arrangement could look something like this:



This room is 11 feet by 17 feet. To get a sense of how big this really is, start measuring some of the other rooms in your house. Your current bathroom is probably no larger than 8 feet by 8 feet. This bathroom is probably bigger than most of your bedrooms, only slightly narrower than your dining room or living room, and about the size of your eat-in kitchen.

And let's do a quick check on the cost of fixtures and materials. The price of a cast iron whirlpool tub is about \$3000, and that incredibly beautiful faucet that you see in that magazine picture could easily cost \$900. Add in the marble that will range from \$70 to \$80 per square foot or molded tiles that start at \$25 per tile. This luxuriously appointed large master bathroom, built in an existing space, will cost \$25,000 to \$40,000 and will take up about one third of your second floor. For this price tag, you could have several nice vacations in hotels with gorgeous bathrooms.

To find the middle ground—a bathroom that will satisfy your need to be pampered but not eat your bank account and your house—consider making the master bathroom an extension of your



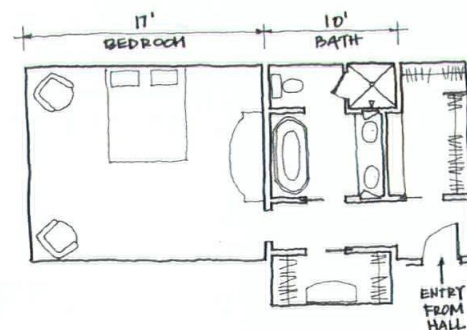
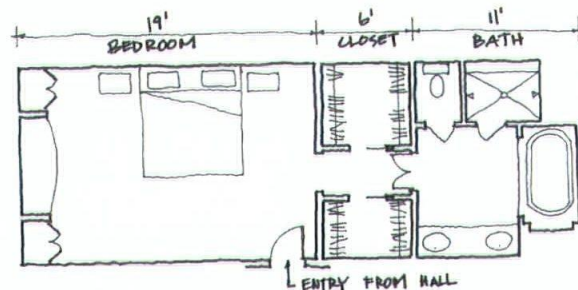
personal living quarters, part of a master suite that includes a sleeping area and a dressing area in addition to the bath. It should be a place that allows you and your significant other to prepare for the day ahead or relax while getting ready for bed. In much the same way that kitchens have become more than just a room to prepare a meal, in recent years, the master bath has become more than just a bathroom.

Making It Fit Your Needs

Once you consider the purpose of a new master bathroom, it's easier to plan and design.

1. Carefully put the bathroom in the context of your entire master suite and bedroom floor. What is the relationship of the master bathroom to the master bedroom, dressing area, and hallway? Hire an architect to help you with this.

Below are two generic plans of master bedroom suites. The first shows a bedroom that is entered from the hall. From the bedroom you pass through a dressing area into the master bathroom, so that the bathroom is the farthest point from the entry, and therefore the most private.



The second plan shows a master suite that is entered through a dressing room with a bath off this vestibule-like space. While making the bath less private, it allows for one member of a couple to get up, wash, get dressed, and leave without bothering the slumbering partner.

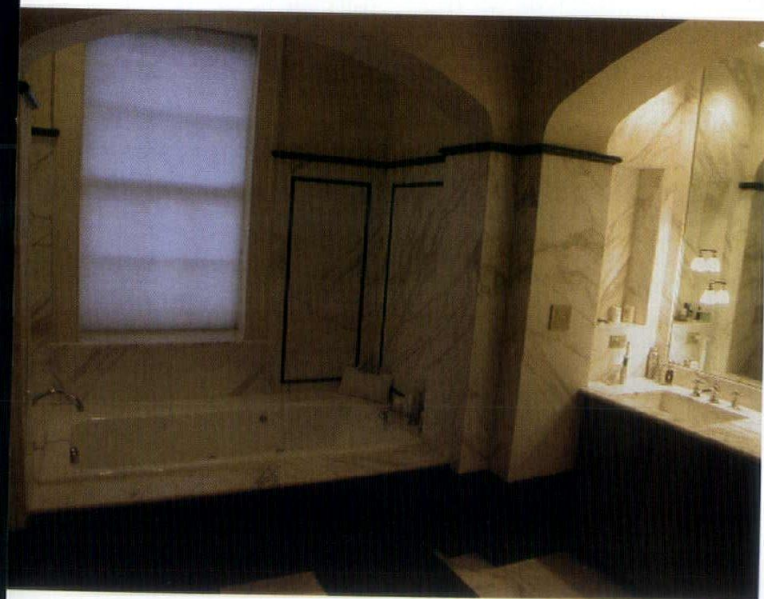
In both schemes the baths are not bigger than the bedrooms. They are adequate and comfortable without being opulent.

2. Designate a specific space for each of the most essential functions. For washing, plan for a contained counter area or a wall against which a sculptural pedestal sink can be properly displayed. The same holds true for the tub, shower, and toilet area. Decide if you really need a separate tub and shower or if a combined shower/tub or even just a shower will do. And decide if the toilet needs its own room. Here are some alcoves with tubs and sinks enclosed in their own distinct spaces:

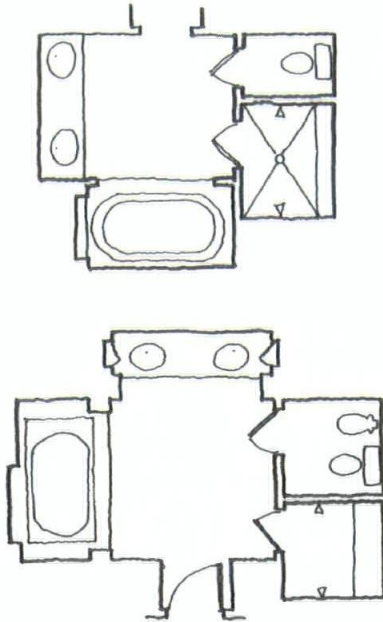
If the fixture has an artistic element, allow some wall space so that it can shine.



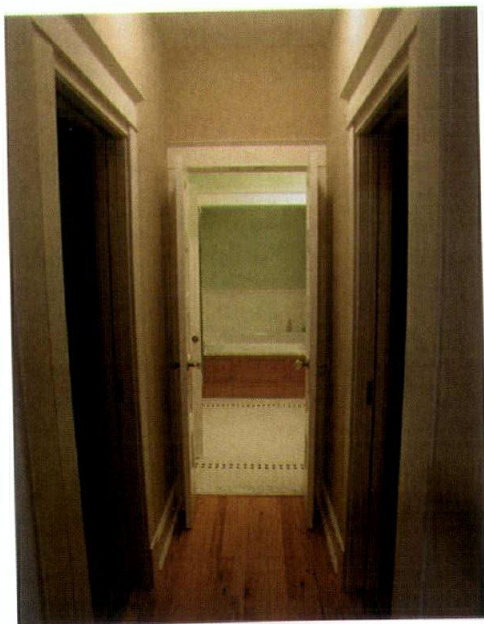
A toilet can be in its own room, but this takes up more space than allowing it to be an object in the bathroom. A nicely designed toilet can be quite a beautiful element, and make the whole room seem bigger.



3. Make your bathroom a *room*. Do not line the fixtures against the wall. Organize different functions around a central space. Decide on the minimal space you need to move around, and try not to let it grow. Here are two plans where each function is in its own space organized around a central square.



4. Carefully consider how the bathroom is an extension of the bedroom and dressing area. The bathroom door probably will be open most of the time. What do you see from the bedroom? Do you look at a beautiful tub in an arched alcove with a small window overlooking your beautifully manicured backyard? Or do you see a toilet with the seat up? And conversely, carefully consider what you see from the bathroom. While lying in the tub enjoying a good soak, is your main focus on the hamper full of dirty clothes, or is it across the bedroom and out the front window? Use the bathroom to make the bedroom bigger and vice versa. The picture below shows the master bedroom looking into the bath; both rooms appear larger because of the connection.

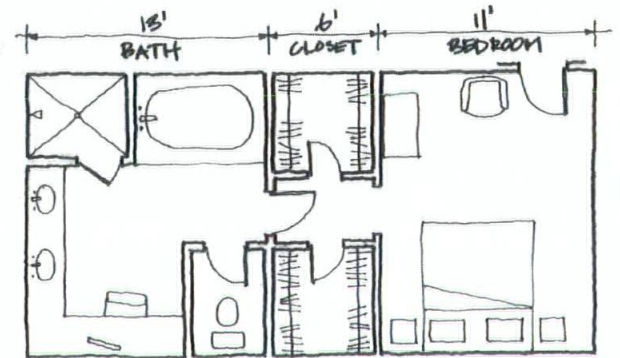


5. Carefully pick fixtures and materials that are in keeping with your tastes and the essential character of the rest of your house. If you live in a 1920s bungalow, stick with a tile that reflects that period. The bathroom shouldn't be the best appointed room in the home. While it is a place where you spend a lot of time, you probably don't entertain there.

Hire a designer who is sympathetic to your tastes and to your home. Do not work with someone who just wants to install bathroom bells and whistles. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that because something is more expensive, it is better. There are many beautiful, inexpensive light fixtures, faucets, and plumbing fixtures that can be used in lieu of the most expensive ones. If you fall in love with a particular fixture that is outside your price range, ask yourself why you like it. Once you have identified the qualities that attract you, you can explain them to a design professional who will help find the same look and feel in your price range.

6. Always consider that your design response should be proportional to the problem. If your tub is just a little too small, do not eat up the entire master bedroom making the bath bigger. Ideally, your bathroom should be smaller than your bedroom, smaller than your dining room, and—although you should enjoy being in it—it should not be the place where you stay all day because the rest of the house is too depressing by comparison.

If your available space for the master suite is 15 feet by 30 feet, do not do this:



Do this.



If you follow these steps, you will have a master bathroom that reflects your style, enhances your house, and makes the start of each day a little more enjoyable. 🏠

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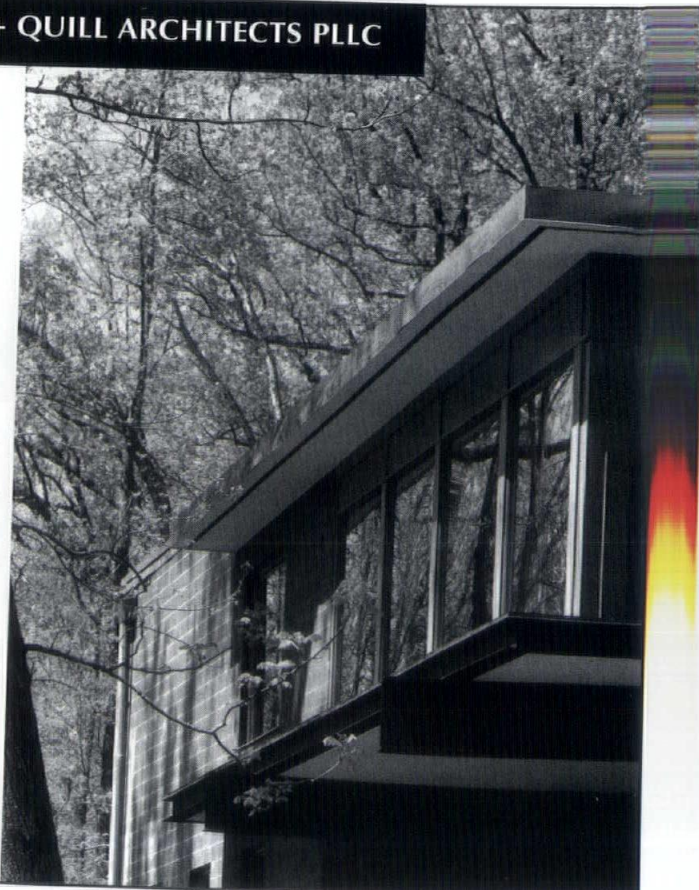
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ARCHITECT

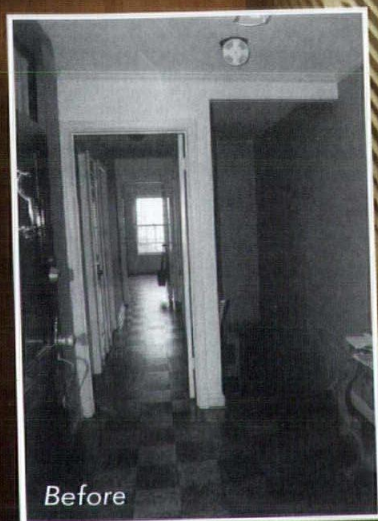
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Answers@Home



The foyer in my apartment is cramped and dark. How can I make it more welcoming?

We recently faced the same challenge in renovating a 1970s duplex apartment at Beekman Place, a gated community off 16th Street near the White House. Entering the small foyer on the second floor, visitors had two options: either proceed to the right, down a dark stair to the living and dining spaces below, or to the left, into a tunnel-like corridor with identical doors leading to bedrooms, bathrooms, and closets. The floor in the foyer, as in the rest of the apartment, was dark parquet. A ceiling fixture provided the only illumination.

By removing the wall that separated the stair from the hall, we made the foyer twice its original size. A simple painted steel railing with a wood cap was designed in its place. All of the doors leading to bedrooms, bathrooms, and closets were replaced with plain

panel-less doors for a less cluttered look. The closet doors have no frames and concealed pivot hinges, so they almost disappear in the wall when closed. Flooring was changed to a natural stained oak.

Because the client is an artist, we designed the wall against the stair to serve as an exhibit space. A minimal track lighting system supports metal wands with tiny halogen bulbs that arc over paintings. The wall received what we called an “urban wash”: thin layers of paint were applied using a fabric rug, creating the uneven effect of an outside wall that has aged over time.

The result is a foyer that serves as an elegant introduction to both the client’s home and his artwork.

—FORMA Design



Before

There's no foyer in my house. The front door opens right into the living room. As a result, my family's coats, backpacks, and sporting equipment are usually strewn on the sofa and chairs.



Before



Our clients for this Chevy Chase, Maryland, addition had the same type of entry problem. They approached us asking for a new bedroom, bath, and study upstairs. We proposed adding all of these new spaces on the front of the house in a single volume that would include, at ground level, a glass vestibule.

The new entry looks like a front porch that has been glassed-in. Floor-to-ceiling windows let a flood of sunlight into the living room—more than it had before. On the client's suggestion, we incorporated a flagstone floor that is easy to keep clean and impervious to snow or salt. Radiant floor heating invisibly warms the space. Lighting fixtures were chosen for their indoor/outdoor look.

Hidden in the columns that flank the transition between the foyer and the living room are much-needed closets. Our client reports that, between these closets and an antique trunk in the vestibule, there is enough storage space to keep the living room clutter-free.

—Treacy & Eagleburger Architects PC



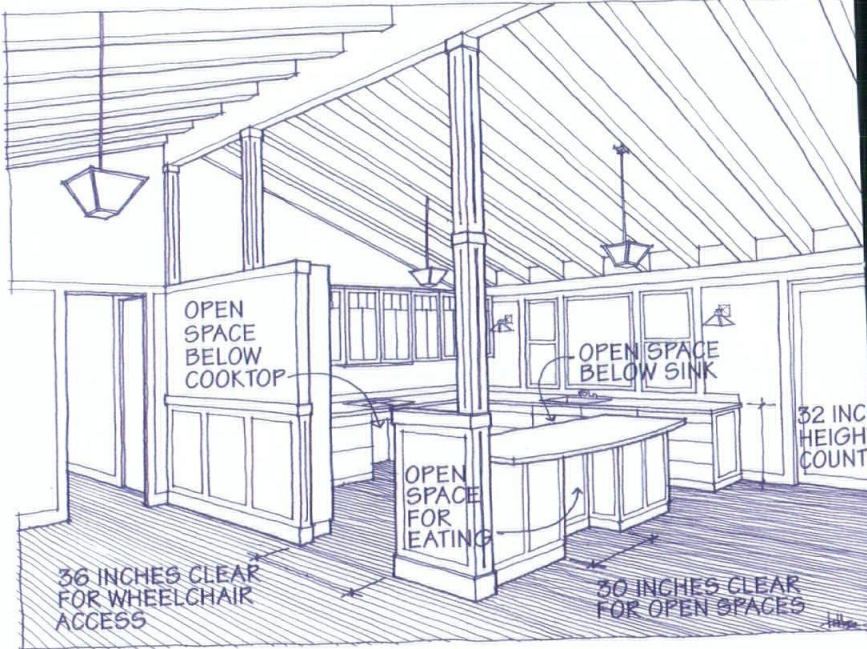
Answers@Home

My husband, who is in a wheelchair, loves to cook—sometimes with a couple of his friends who also use wheelchairs. How can we make our kitchen more accessible to him and his friends without reducing the resale value of the house?

I suggest you start by removing as many interior walls as possible to provide a large, unobstructed area for cooking and entertaining. The turning radius required for a wheelchair is five feet, so the open space in your kitchen should be at least 12 feet by 12 feet to accommodate up to three wheelchairs without feeling crowded. The flooring should be a smooth material, such as hardwood, which offers minimum resistance to moving a wheelchair.

Kitchen countertops are typically 36 inches high, but in your case I would lower them to 34 inches, the standard suggested in the Americans With Disabilities Act guidelines. This height allows easy access to the countertops for someone in a wheelchair and also leaves enough room under the cooktop and sink for the chair's armrests and the occupant's legs. You could add an island for additional work space and a place to eat, with a 30-inch wide space below to pull in the wheelchair.

This plan doesn't call for more under-the-counter spaces because you will need as much room as possible for accessible base cabinets. Wall cabinets and other storage spaces above five feet cannot be reached by someone in a wheelchair. Cabinet manufacturers make cutting boards and other work surfaces that slide out of base cabinets like drawers. Your husband could also use a tray on his lap for food preparation.



There are many more accessible appliances to choose from than there were a few years ago. Cooktops are now available with controls on the front, which are easier to reach and safer than those on the top. You can find ovens with doors that swing to the side, allowing the cook to reach more easily into a hot oven. Single-lever sink controls make it easy to adjust the volume and temperature of the water with one hand. Standard models of such appliances as dishwashers, side-by-side refrigerators, and countertop microwave ovens work well for a wheelchair user.

I designed the accessible kitchen shown here to look as attractive as possible, since it is open to the dining and family rooms. It has hardwood floors, wood and glass cabinets, countertops trimmed with wood, hardwood beams and wainscot paneling, and handcrafted lighting fixtures. The standard cabinets, countertops, appliances, and plumbing fixtures were installed so that the special accessibility features could be modified in the future. For example, the base cabinets were trimmed two inches at the bottom to lower the countertops, but they could easily be raised to their original height; the open spaces below the cooktop, sink, and island could be filled in with additional base cabinets.

—Thomas F. Klose Architect, Inc.





Answers@Home

Enclosed is a photo of my back porch. Can you suggest some simple improvements that would make it a nicer place to spend time?

It looks like your first problem is storage: no matter how nice the weather is, you won't want to spend time on your back porch if coolers, gardening equipment, and recycling are cluttering the space. The second issue is comfort: how can you be outside but still feel as comfortable as you do inside?

When we renovated a turn-of-the-century row house in Capitol Hill, the client asked that we design a secure, dry storage area in the backyard for gardening supplies. We responded by enclosing the area under the back porch with wood siding that matched the rest of the house. We replaced the porch's wood floor with exterior-rated quarry tile set on durock, which created a water-tight roof for the storage area. The tile will last longer than a wooden deck, and it's easier to keep clean.

We had faithfully restored historic details inside the home, and we carried some of these details to the back porch to make it feel more like an exterior room. The coffered ceiling is a take-off from the kitchen, and the Chippendale railing is a throwback to the time when the house was built. As a finishing touch, the client chose paint colors that continue the palette used inside.

I don't recommend screens for a porch like this one. Screens obstruct the view, collect dirt, and interrupt the porch's connection with the outdoors. Instead, we installed a ceiling fan, which serves two purposes: it keeps the bugs away, and it creates a pleasant breeze on humid Washington summer nights.

—Panoramic Design

Scott Wilets, AIA

Scott Wilets, AIA



Seeking Questions for Future Issues of AIA/DC Magazine

Is your home architecturally challenged? Ask an architect for a solution: write to Answers@Home, c/o the Washington Chapter/AIA, 1777 Church Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20036. Or e-mail Hannah McCann, Editor, at hmccann@aiaadc.com.

(är'kə-tek't')

Word Choice

Make Sure It's an "Architect"

by Mary Fitch, AICP

Executive Director, Washington Chapter/AIA

Take a second look at that business card: does it say, "John Doe, Architect," or "John Doe, Architectural Services"? Does Mr. Doe describe himself to you as an "architect" or an "architectural designer"? Any word other than "architect" means you're getting less than you deserve.

Legally, the word "architect" may only be used to describe a registered architect. The signifier "RA" (Registered Architect) or "AIA" (architect member of the American Institute of Architects) after a name denotes this distinction. Unlike an architectural designer, an architect has successfully completed at least five years of study, three years of internship, and a grueling nine-part exam to become licensed and registered. Registration ensures that an architect is qualified to take responsibility for the safety of his or her design, not just way it looks.

If an architect chooses to be an AIA member, they have decided

to further supplement their registration requirements with the Institute's ongoing continuing education requirements. AIA architects are exposed to the latest advances in building technology, security issues, environmentally friendly design, and more.

What does all this mean for the homeowner? You can rest assured that a registered architect is trained to incorporate cost and function into your design. Even in a seemingly small project, there may be significant structural issues that should be addressed by a licensed professional trained in building construction. Licensed architects are required to know local building codes and permitting procedures; they can work through technical issues with authorities on the spot, saving time and money.

At first, it may seem only a matter of letters, but knowing the difference between "designer" and "architect" can greatly affect the success of your project. ■

How to Work with an Architect

Saturday, June 22, 2002

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Washington Chapter/AIA, 1777 Church Street, NW

A free workshop is available to the public on *How to Work with an Architect*.

Award-winning architect Stephen Vanze, AIA, a principal with the firm of Barnes Vanze & Associates, leads this workshop on Saturday, June 22nd, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The workshop will teach how to get the most out of your collaboration with an architect, address common misunderstandings that can lead to problems and missed opportunities, and familiarize participants with the various styles and practices of Washington architects. Included is an orientation to the Architect/Client Resource Center, a free portfolio service which provides the information needed to select the best architect for a particular project.

The workshop will be held at the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1777 Church St. NW (metro Dupont Circle, between 17th and 18th and P and Q streets). Space is limited. Please call 202.667.1798 or e-mail reservations@aiadc.com to reserve a place.



Renovating for Resale?

Michael Rankin Knows What Homebuyers Want in Washington, D.C.

by Hannah McCann

"Really usable rooms are important today," says Michael Rankin. Pictured here: the Tanner/Melos Residence by Robert M. Gurney, FAIA.

Homeowners embarking on an architectural venture should indulge in a healthy dose of fantasy: look at magazine pictures, imagine views of the sunset, picture yourself serving holiday dinners or reading by a fireplace. After all, to get your dream house you've got to dream.

But inevitably you'll also question if it's worth it. Even if you plan to live in your new home for the rest of your life, the nagging question lingers: What about resale value?

In the Washington area, for now, the answer is encouraging no matter what your plans entail. "It's a seller's market. Because there's so little inventory, everything is a multiple-contract presentation," says Michael Rankin, of Tutt, Taylor & Rankin Real Estate. For 13 years, Rankin has worked in all four quadrants of the city, selling homes of all styles and sizes, from historic estates to modern condominiums.

Despite the tight market, Rankin sees buyers turned off as often as they're turned on by home renovations. He offers a few tips on what to think about if you're starting a project with resale value as one consideration.

Put Your Money Where Your Plumbing Is

It's tried and true: dollar for dollar, a homeowner finds the most resale value in improving a kitchen or bathroom. Lately Rankin has noticed a few specific selling points of the better kitchens and baths.

"I think you'd be ahead of the curve to start doing softer tones and softer finishes. White seems to be coming back: white kitchen cabinets, white appliances. Everybody still wants granite countertops, but honed granite instead of shiny granite. Less is more sometimes."

If you're choosing finishes with an eye on resale, "Look at any architecture magazine: what's selling is what people want. Or go to a bunch of open houses and see what other people have done and what looks good."

In the bathroom, Rankin sees a trend towards open-but-private spaces. "Instead of the side-by-side vanity, where you're standing next to your husband or wife, people want more private space. I even saw a house where the vanities were face to face, with the mirror between. You could still hear the person but you couldn't



Hoachlander Davis Photography



Geoffrey Ho

In the kitchen, white cabinets and softer finishes attract buyers today. Pictured here: kitchens by Wiedemann Architects (left) and FORMA Design.

see them.” Another selling point: put the toilet in a separate space off the bathroom.

“Big bathtubs are also important,” Rankin says. “People ask me, ‘I never use the bathtub; can we just make a big double shower instead?’ The answer is no. Buyers want the bathtub. In a small condo, where you’re restricted by space, an architect could be really helpful. The double-headed shower, the bathtub or Jacuzzi tub, the separate toilet area, and your vanities—an architect can find a way to get them all in the same space.”

Livable Rooms

Rankin meets a lot of buyers who are willing to forego the extra square footage of new homes in the extended suburbs for a shorter commute. “It’s a quality of life issue. People are deciding to live in smaller spaces but more convenient locations.”

But buying a smaller space means that every inch counts. “Really usable rooms are important today,” Rankin says. “Our parents said, ‘Don’t sit on the sofa.’ But we don’t live like that anymore.” Rankin sees buyers responding to living rooms “where you really can imagine crawling up on the sofa and reading a book.”

In general, Rankin sees a trend towards “less formal space, more open space—even for your two-million-dollar house in Georgetown.”

New Tricks in an Old Town?

If you look at high-end shelter magazines, you’ll see homes clad in modernist materials like steel and concrete. But advertisements for the finest real estate in Washington are more likely to show elegant marble foyers or cherry paneling. Contrary to appearances, Rankin insists that modern homes are a hot commodity in Washington.

“I think modern design does well in Washington because we don’t have that much of it. When someone’s adventurous and does it—and does it well—it’s refreshing. I wouldn’t discourage anybody from doing contemporary additions to an old house, or opening up the back with walls of glass and steel....I think buyers like it.”

Rankin sees modern design creeping into neighborhoods that are enjoying a rebirth, “the whole downtown market—Logan, Shaw, NoMa [North of Massachusetts Avenue], U Street, just above U Street, Columbia Heights, even into LeDroit Park. In neighborhoods that seemed to be abandoned, it may be that the only thing left is the facade. There wasn’t anything to salvage. You almost have a clean canvas.”

Recently, developers in these neighborhoods have started to turn vacant lots into contemporary-styled loft apartment buildings. “It’s very sexy, the idea of living in a loft,” Rankin says. “People want the openness, they want the light, they want the dramatic space.”



Residence by Barnes, Vanze & Associates, Architects reflects the trend toward less formal, more open space.



The condos at Solo Piazza by Bonstra Architects are atypically modern for Washington. "People walk in and they're wowed," according to Rankin. (Interior design by Giorgio Furiolo.)

Solo Piazza is one such development at 13th and N Streets, NW, designed by Bonstra Architects. As the listing agent, Rankin watched buyers' reactions. "It's an atypical space for Washington. There are huge windows, columns coming through your apartment, everything on an angle—just really interesting spaces that are done very well. People see an ad that says, 'New Condominiums, Interesting Design.' They walk in and they're wowed."

The Fixer-Upper

"A lot of people ask me, 'Can I buy an old shell to fix up?'" Rankin says. "Having done numerous renovations myself, I just say, 'Yes, but you better be prepared.'"

Rankin encourages first-time fixer-uppers to think about breaking their project into several steps. "Create a master plan and do it over three years. Tackle the kitchen, or maybe do the basement apartment first, live in there, and then do upstairs. Get a good architect, find someone who you can communicate well with, and who will really guide you. That way you get to enjoy the transformation, and you see it taking place, but it's not overwhelming."

Do you really need an architect? "If someone does their own work, often they aren't able to build what they were thinking—to take their thoughts to completion. Buyers see that. It's all the little things: How high should the light switch be? How does everything line up? Things that you don't think about until it's too late. They're little but they're quite important in the way you live in the space."

"My philosophy in life is that there are experts in every field, and unless you are that expert, you should hire that expert to do it, whether it's an accountant or a lawyer or a real estate broker or an architect." 🏠



Solo Piazza-Bussolati Associates



Solo Piazza-Bussolati Associates

14 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

1. Think about your current home.
What do you like about it?
What's missing?
What don't you like?
2. How do you use your home?
Are you there a lot?
Do you work at home?
Do you entertain often?
Do you have any specialized hobbies?
How much time do you spend in the living areas, bedrooms, kitchen, office, etc.?
Do you use your yard?
3. Why do you want a change?
Do you need more room?
Are children grown and moving on?
Do you have new interests or needs?
What do you want that you don't have now?
4. How will you use your new or improved home?
What functions and activities need space
(e.g. cooking, sleeping, studying, playing)?
How much space will you need for each function?
5. Are there specific features, fixtures, or products that you want to include?
6. What do you think the addition/renovation/new home should look like?
What should it look like inside?
What should it look like outside?
7. What are your preferred design styles?
Do you have pictures of what you like?
8. How much disruption can you tolerate during the design and construction process?
9. How much time do you have to be involved in the process?
10. Do you plan to do any of the construction work yourself?
11. Who will be the primary contact with the architect, contractor, and others involved in designing and building your project? (It is good to have one point of contact to prevent confusion and mixed messages.)
12. How soon would you like to be settled into the new place? Are there rigid time constraints?
13. How much can you realistically afford to spend on this project? (No, this is *not* the bottom line.)
14. What qualities are you looking for in an architect? (*This is!*)

Once you have answered these questions, you will be prepared to talk with an architect. The more detailed information you give, the easier it will be for the architect to address your needs.

14 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR ARCHITECT

1. What are important issues or challenges in this project?
2. How will the architect determine what you need?
3. What is the architect's design philosophy?
4. How busy is the architect?
5. How does the architect organize the design process?
6. What will the architect show you along the way to explain the project? Will you see models, drawings, or sketches?
7. Who from the architecture firm will you be dealing with directly? Is that the same person who will be designing the project? Who will be designing your project?
8. How does the architect establish fees?
9. What would the architect expect the fee to be for this project?
10. What is the architect's experience/track record with cost estimating?
11. If the scope of the project changes later, will there be additional fees? How will these fees be justified?
12. What services does the architect provide during construction?
13. How disruptive will construction be? How long does the architect expect it to take to complete your project?
14. Does the architect have a list of past clients that the firm has worked with?

WHAT TO EXPECT

The Steps Involved in Design and Construction

Design and construction projects involve several steps. Typically, projects go through the following six phases, but on some projects these steps may be combined or there may be additional ones.

Deciding What to Build

The first stage is programming: the homeowner and architect discuss the requirements for the project (how many rooms, the function of the spaces, etc.), testing the fit between the owner's needs, wants, and budget.

Rough Sketches

The architect prepares a series of rough sketches, known as schematic designs, which show the general arrangement of rooms and of the site. Some architects also prepare

models to help visualize the project. The homeowner approves these sketches before proceeding to the next phase.

Refining the Design

The architect prepares more detailed drawings to illustrate other aspects of the proposed design. Floor plans show all the rooms in correct size and shape. Outline specifications are prepared, listing the major materials and room finishes.

Preparation of Construction Documents

Once the homeowner has approved the design, the architect prepares detailed drawings and specifications, which the contractor will use to establish actual construction cost and build the project. These drawings and specifications become part of the building contract.

Hiring the Contractor

The homeowner selects and hires the contractor. The architect may be willing to

make some recommendations. In many cases, homeowners choose from among several contractors they've asked to submit bids on the job. The architect can help you prepare bidding documents as well as invitations to bid and instructions to bidders.

Construction Administration

While the contractor will physically build the home or addition, the architect can assist the homeowner in making sure that the project is built according to the plans and specifications. The architect can make site visits to observe construction, review and approve the contractor's applications for payment, and generally keep the homeowner informed of the project's progress. The contractor is solely responsible for construction methods, techniques, schedules, and procedures.

These guidelines are based on those prepared by the American Institute of Architects, copyright 1992. For more information on working with an architect, contact the Washington Chapter/AIA's Architect/Client Resource Center at 202.667.1798, or visit www.aiaadc.com.

The Architect/Client Resource Center

The Washington Chapter/AIA's Architect/Client Resource Center is a free service that helps homeowners find the right architect for their project.

The Resource Center is a library of local firms' portfolios, which include pictures of projects and detailed histories of qualifications. Visitors can pick up design ideas, business cards, and general information on the architect's role in the design and construction process. In addition, the Chapter staff is available to informally advise on particular needs or concerns.

To schedule a free visit, call 202.667.1798. The Resource Center is housed at the AIA/DC Chapter House, 1777 Church Street, NW, Washington, D.C. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday.

As of June 2002, the following Architects and Affiliates are represented in the Architect/Client Resource Center:

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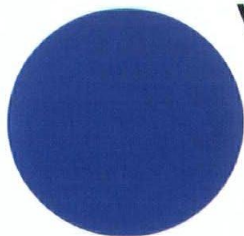
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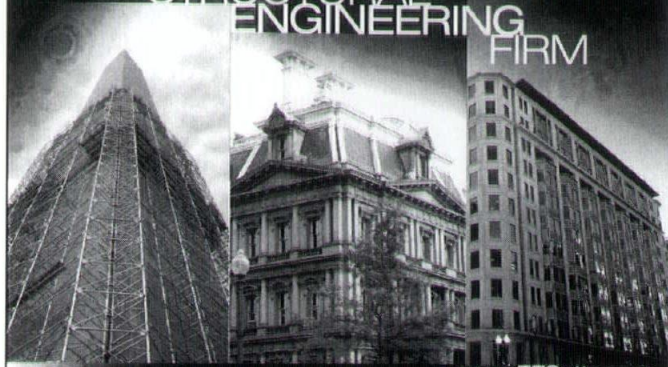
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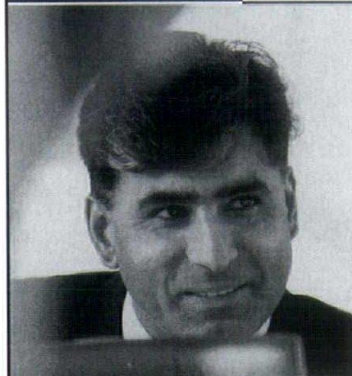
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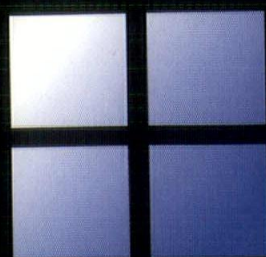
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